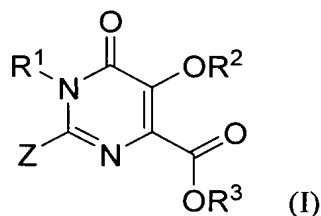


**Amendments to the Claims**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Previously Presented) A compound of formula (I) below, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof:



wherein

Z represents C<sub>2-6</sub> alkynyl, aryl or heteroaryl, any of which groups may be optionally substituted;

R<sup>1</sup> represents C<sub>1-6</sub> alkyl or aryl(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkyl, either of which groups may be optionally substituted;

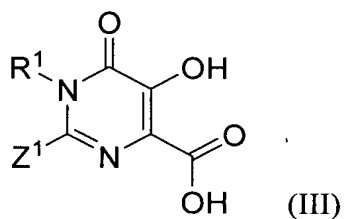
R<sup>2</sup> represents hydrogen; or C<sub>1-6</sub> alkyl, C<sub>2-6</sub> alkylcarbonyl, aryl, arylcarbonyl, heteroaryl, aryl(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkyl or heteroaryl(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkyl, any of which groups may be optionally substituted; and

R<sup>3</sup> represents hydrogen, C<sub>1-6</sub> alkyl, C<sub>3-7</sub> heterocycloalkyl(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkyl, di(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkylamino(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkyl, C<sub>2-6</sub> alkylcarbonyloxy(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkyl or C<sub>3-7</sub> cycloalkoxycarbonyloxy(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkyl;

provided that, when Z is unsubstituted phenyl, then R<sup>1</sup>, R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>3</sup> do not each simultaneously represent methyl.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) A compound as claimed in claim 1 represented by formula (III) below:

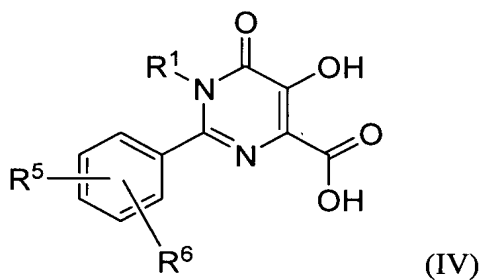


wherein

Z<sup>1</sup> represents optionally substituted aryl; and

R<sup>1</sup> is as defined in claim 1.

4. (Original) A compound as claimed in claim 3 represented by formula (IV):



wherein

R<sup>1</sup> is as defined in claim 1; and

R<sup>5</sup> and R<sup>6</sup> are each independently selected from hydrogen and a substituent group of formula (II):

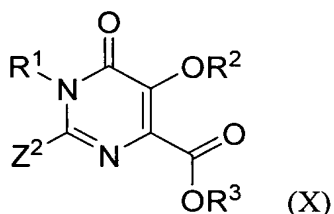


in which

X is selected  
from -NH-SO<sub>2</sub>-, -NH-SO<sub>2</sub>-NH-, -CH<sub>2</sub>-SO<sub>2</sub>-, -SO<sub>2</sub>-NH-, -NH-CO-NH-, -NH-CS-NH-, -N  
H-CO-O-, -NH-CO-, -CO-NH-, -NH-CO-NH-SO<sub>2</sub>-, -NH-CO-NH-CO-, -O-, -S-, -SO-, -S  
O<sub>2</sub>-, -NH-, -CH<sub>2</sub>-, -CH<sub>2</sub>O- and -CH<sub>2</sub>S-; and

R<sup>4</sup> represents aryl, aryl(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkyl, C<sub>3-7</sub> cycloalkyl, C<sub>1-6</sub> alkyl,  
heteroaryl(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkyl, C<sub>3-7</sub> heterocycloalkyl or C<sub>2-6</sub> alkenyl, any of which groups may be  
optionally substituted.

5. (Previously Presented) A compound as claimed in claim 1 represented by  
formula (X) below:

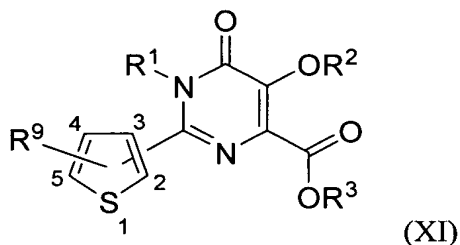


wherein

Z<sup>2</sup> represents optionally substituted heteroaryl; and

R<sup>1</sup>, R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>3</sup> are as defined in claim 1.

6. (Original) A compound as claimed in claim 5 represented by formula (XI)  
below:



wherein

R<sup>1</sup>, R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>3</sup> are as defined in claim 1; and

R<sup>9</sup> represents hydrogen or a group of formula (II) as defined in claim 4.

7. (Previously Presented) A compound, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, selected from the group consisting of:

2-[3-({[(2-chlorobenzyl)amino]carbonyl}amino)thien-2-yl]-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-2-(thien-2-yl)-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-2-(thiazol-2-yl)-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-2-(3-nitrothien-2-yl)-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-2-(3-aminothien-2-yl)-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-2-(3-bromothien-2-yl)-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-[3-(Acetylamino)thien-2-yl]-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-[3-(Benzoylamino)thien-2-yl]-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-2-(3-{[(2-methyl-1*H*-indol-3-yl)acetyl]amino}thien-2-yl)-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-(3-{[3-(2-Chlorophenyl)propanoyl]amino}thien-2-yl)-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-{3-[(Anilinocarbonyl)amino]thien-2-yl}-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-(3-{{(1,1'-Biphenyl-2-ylamino)carbonyl}amino}thien-2-yl)-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-(3-{{(Benzhydrylamino)carbonyl}amino}thien-2-yl)-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-2-{3-[[{1-(1-naphthyl)ethyl}amino]-carbonyl]amino}thien-2-yl}-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-2-[3-{{(2-phenylcyclopropyl)amino}-carbonyl}amino]thien-2-yl]-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-2-[3-{{(2-phenylethyl)amino}-carbonyl}amino]thien-2-yl]-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-2-{3-[(isobutoxycarbonyl)amino]thien-2-yl}-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

*N*<sup>1</sup>-Benzyl-*N*<sup>2</sup>-[2-(4-carboxy-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidin-2-yl)thiophen-3-yl]glycinamide,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-2-(3-{{(2*E*)-3-phenylprop-2-enyl}amino}thien-2-yl)-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-(4-Carboxy-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidin-2-yl)-*N*-(3-phenylpropyl)thiophen-3-amine,

2-{3-[2-(Benzyloxy)ethyl]thien-2-yl}-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-{4-[[{[(2-Chlorophenyl)sulfonyl]amino}carbonyl]amino]thien-3-yl}-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-{3-[[{[(2-Chlorophenyl)sulfonyl]amino}carbonyl]amino]thien-2-yl}-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-2-(3-hydroxyphenyl)-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-(3-([(1,1'-Biphenyl-2-ylamino)carbonyl]amino)phenyl)-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-[3-([(3-Carboxyphenyl)amino]carbonyl)amino]phenyl]-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-{3-[(Benzylsulfonyl)amino]thien-2-yl}-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-2-{3-[(2-naphthylsulphonyl)amino]thien-2-yl}-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-(3-Formylthien-2-yl)-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-(3-Carboxythien-2-yl)-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-[3-([(2-(2-Chlorophenyl)ethyl)amino]carbonyl)thien-2-yl]-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-2-{3-[(*E*)-2-phenylethenyl]thien-2-yl}-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-2-[3-(2-phenylethyl)thien-2-yl]-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

2-{3-[(1*E*)-4-(2-Chlorophenyl)but-1-enyl]thien-2-yl}-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-2-[3-(4-phenylbutyl)thien-2-yl]-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-2-{3-[(4-methoxybenzyl)oxy]phenyl}-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,  
2-{2-[(3,4-Dichlorobenzyl)oxy]phenyl}-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,  
2-(Furan-2-yl)-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,  
5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-2-{3-[(*E*)-2-phenylethenyl]furan-2-yl}-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,  
5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-2-(thien-3-yl)-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,  
5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-2-[(trimethylsilyl)ethynyl]-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylate,  
1-[2-(2-Chlorophenyl)ethyl]-5-hydroxy-6-oxo-2-(thien-2-yl)-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,  
1-Ethyl-5-hydroxy-6-oxo-2-(thien-2-yl)-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,  
1-Benzyl-5-hydroxy-6-oxo-2-(thien-2-yl)-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,  
5-Hydroxy-6-oxo-2-(thien-2-yl)-1-(2,2,2-trifluoroethyl)-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid, and  
1-(4-Carboxybenzyl)-5-hydroxy-6-oxo-2-(thien-2-yl)-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid.

8. (Previously Presented) A compound, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, selected from the group consisting of:

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-2-[3-([2-(1-naphthyl)ethyl]sulfonylamino)thien-2-yl]-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,

5-Hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-2-{3-[[{(2-phenyl-1,3-thiazol-4-yl)methyl]amino}carbonyl]amino]thien-2-yl}-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid,  
and

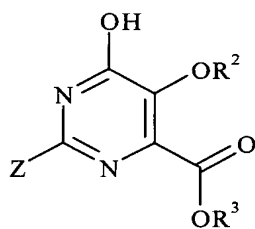
2-[3-[[{(2-Chlorobenzyl)oxy]carbonyl}amino]thien-2-yl]-5-hydroxy-1-methyl-6-oxo-1,6-dihydropyrimidine-4-carboxylic acid.

9. (Original) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound of formula (I) as defined in claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, in association with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

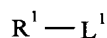
10. (Canceled)

11. (Original) A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (I) as defined in claim 1, which comprises:

(A) reacting a compound of formula (XIV) with a compound of formula (XV):



(XIV)

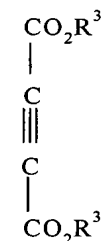


(XV)

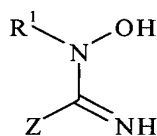
wherein Z, R<sup>1</sup>, R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>3</sup> are as defined in claim 1, and L<sup>1</sup> represents a suitable leaving group; or

(B) reacting a compound of formula (XVIII) with a compound of formula (XIX):





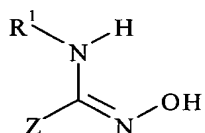
(XVIII)



(XIX)

wherein Z, R<sup>1</sup> and R<sup>3</sup> are as defined in claim 1; followed by cyclisation of the intermediate thereby obtained; or

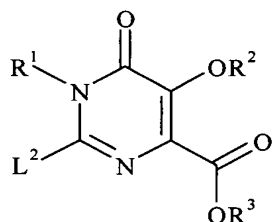
(C) reacting a compound of formula (XVIII) as defined above with a compound of formula (XX):



(XX)

wherein Z and R<sup>1</sup> are as defined in claim 1; followed by cyclisation of the intermediate thereby obtained; or

(D) reacting a compound of formula Z-B(OH)<sub>2</sub> with a compound of formula (XXII):



(XXII)

wherein Z, R<sup>1</sup>, R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>3</sup> are as defined in claim 1, and L<sup>2</sup> represents a suitable leaving group; in the presence of a transition metal catalyst; and

(E) subsequently, if required, converting a compound of formula (I) initially obtained into a further compound of formula (I) by standard methods.

12-13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) A method of treating an illness due to hepatitis C virus, which comprises administering to a subject suffering from the condition a therapeutically or ~~prophylactically~~ effective amount of a compound of formula (I) as defined in claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.